T.J. Masters

AP English, Period 4

Gender Essay

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How To Drive With Your Knees

Heaven forbid she ever *just* drive. As a child, every time I had the honor to sit in the coveted front seat of the car, I looked over at my mother in awe as she steered with her knee, applied makeup in the vanity mirror, talked on her cell phone, and abated the earth shattering conflict of whose side is who’s in the back seat. Miraculously, she managed to keep the car on the road, and we always reached our destination without a scratch. I couldn’t wait until I got freedom in the form of a laminated card so I could complete every task under the sun *and* still get to where I need to be; if my mother, a woman, could do it, surely I would be able to do it far better.. Much to my dismay, more than ten years later, now that I do have my license, I find myself unable to select a song on my music player without hurling the car and every passenger in it, into some grave danger. My lack of ability to multitask baffled me. Weren’t men supposed to be the superior multitaskers? I have come to find out that the supposed fact that men are better at multitasking may be an utter fallacy.

The myth that men are more skillful at multitasking in all likelihood shares its origins with most male-biased stereotypes. For centuries, men have always been perceived as the superior beings. Dating back to the Stone Ages, the men were always required to go out to work to protect and support the family while the women stayed home and completed the seemingly mundane task of raising the children The occupation of women was never thought of as a particularly difficult exercise, and thus the man was always thought of as the prime gender. In today’s world, a world in which women have (for the most part) found their voice in society, leftover prejudices still exist. When multitasking is taken into perspective, this is apparent. The male, always known as the hunter and gatherer of a family, should be the better multitasker if he is in fact the more valuable gender. Which sex, however, is truly better at multitasking? Although many experts are in a general consensus that the true answer to this question remains equivocal, several studies have yielded results in favor of women.

In order to multitask in the true sense of the word, the multiple actions completed must be done with productivity and accuracy. Many people of both sexes claim to be adept in multitasking, however disregard the efficiency or whether or not the tasks are completed correctly. Furthermore, according to a study by Dr. Glenn Wilson, the average person drops as many as ten functioning I.Q. points while multitasking. This is more than double the four point I.Q. loss humans experience while smoking marijuana. However, the I.Q. drop for men was found as slightly greater than the decrease for women (“Multitasking; The Real Difference Between Men and Women”). The fact that men typically lose more functioning I.Q. points while multitasking proves that women apply more brainpower to their tasks. However, this study does not necessarily prove that women are the superior multitaskers.

The definition of multitasking could also be the act of completing a singular task while incorporating various resources from one’s environment. In another study, Dr. Christina Williams of Duke University experimented with rats and their ability to navigate a maze with clues from their environment. The study concluded that the male lab rats only responded to one or two environmental clues, while the female lab rats applied multiple clues along with a surprising knowledge of geometry (Criss). This study suggests that women are more prone to using multiple cues from their environment, while men would rather implement solitary environmental prompts.

Although the majority of evidence supports women as the superior multitaskers, many critics of the performed studies point out potential bias or flaws within the experiments. First, most studies only conclude with women coming out slightly on top. Dr. Marcel Just of Carnegie Mellon University states that women also score higher solely in experiments that require the subjects to listen to two things simultaneously (Criss). Dr. Just infers that men are more skillful at managing more than two tasks, and thus the better multitaskers. However, Dr. Just’s statement is not researched in the least, and thus is not a reputable assertion. As of now, no study has been conducted in which men reign supreme.

As stated earlier, psychologists and scientists alike have concluded that the gender difference in multitasking is nonexistent, despite the researching leaning in the favor of females. The concurrence sprouts from the fact that in every study, girls came out only slightly ahead (Criss). The results of the research are simply not significant enough to draw a conclusion. However, this also means that the statement that men are the better multitaskers is purely erroneous. The truth is that the gender differences in multitasking are simply nonexistent.

How one performs at handling multiple tasks concurrently lucidly depends on the person. Multitasking comes with experience, not gender. My mother was able to handle all of those tasks while driving because of her vast experience of accomplishing each of those tasks individually. Although currently I may not be able to complete multiple exercises in the car without endangering people, as my driving experience grows, as will my ability to multitask while driving. With experience and comfort with driving on the road, everyone will have the ability to emulate my mother, and drive with their knees.

Works Cited

Criss, Brandy. "GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MULTITASKING." National Undergraduate Research Clearinghouse. 19 Apr. 2009 <<http://www.diigo.com/annotated/e4830078aee5b3d799418389a819fb3e>>.

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